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1. (Amended) A method of merging images of segments of a view, comprising:  
receiving a first image representing a first segment of the view and a second image  
representing a second segment of the view, the images being received from a remote location  
over a network;

determining the position of the second segment of the view relative to the first segment of  
the view without the aid of positioning information provided by a human operator;

blending the first image with the second image based solely on the content of the images  
and the determined position of the second segment relative to the first segment to merge the first  
image and the second image into a panoramic image of the view; and

transmitting the panoramic image over the network.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

determining whether the second image overlaps the first image based on the position of  
the second segment relative to the first segment, wherein the blending the first image and the  
second image is only performed when the second image overlaps the first image.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

correcting perspective distortion in the second image relative to the first image prior to  
blending the first image with the second image.

4. (Cancelled)

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5. (Amended) A method of merging a set of images, each image representing a corresponding segment of a view, the set including a first image representing a first segment of the view, a second image representing a second segment of the view, and a third image representing a third segment of the view, where the third segment of the view overlaps both the first segment and the second segment of the view, the method comprising;

determining a first relative position of the third segment relative to the first segment of the view by processing the content of the third image and the first image;

determining a first overlap area of the first image and the third image based on the determined first relative position;

determining a second relative position of the third segment relative to the second segment of the view by processing the content of the third image and the second image;

determining a second overlap area of the second image and the third image based on the determined second relative position; and

if the first overlap area is greater than the second overlap area, offsetting the position of the third image relative to the first image and the second image based on the determined first relative position;

otherwise, offsetting the position of the third image relative to the first image and the second image based on the determined second relative position.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5 further comprising:

correcting perspective distortion in at least one of the set of images prior to blending the set of images.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 5 further comprising:

determining which of the images is a central one and which are peripheral images; and

using the central image as an initial reference image in correcting perspective distortion in peripheral images.

8. (Amended) The method of claim 7 further comprising:

determining what pair-wise overlap areas exist between the central image and each of the peripheral images; and

selecting as the first peripheral image to have perspective distortion corrected a peripheral image having a maximum pair-wise overlap area with the central image relative to the other peripheral images.

9 (Original) The method of claim 8 further comprising:

prior to blending the set of images:

determining a first overlap area between a second one of the peripheral images and the central one of the images;

determining a second overlap area between the second one of the peripheral images and the first peripheral one of the images;

if the first overlap area is greater than the second overlap area, correcting perspective distortion in the second one of the peripheral images relative to the central one of the images.

10 (Original) The method of claim 9 further comprising:

prior to blending the set of images:

if the first overlap area is less than the second overlap area, correcting perspective distortion in the second one of the peripheral images relative to the first peripheral one of the images.

11. (Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising blending the third image with the first and second image, wherein the blending includes:

dividing the third image into a first portion and a second portion, based on the first relative position; and

compositing the first portion of the third image on the first image at the first position to produce a composite image, the compositing causing the first portion to mask out a part of the first image.

12. (Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein blending the third image with the first and second image further includes:

dividing the second image into a third portion and a second portion, based on a relative position of the second segment of the view relative to the first segment of the view;

dividing the third portion into a fifth portion and a sixth portion, based on the second relative position; and

compositing the fifth portion of the third image on the composite image based on the second relative position to form the panoramic image, the compositing of the fifth portion causing the fifth portion to mask out a part of the composite image.

13.-14. (Cancelled)

15. (Amended) An article comprising a computer-readable medium on which are tangibly stored computer-executable instructions for merging images of segments of a view, the stored instructions being operable to cause a computer to:

receive a first image representing a first segment of the view and a second image representing a second segment of the view, the images being received from a remote location over a network;

determine the position of the second segment of the view relative to the first segment of the view without the aid of positioning information provided by a human operator;

blend the first image with the second image based solely on the content of the images and the determined position of the second segment relative to the first segment to merge the first image and the second image into a panoramic image of the view; and

transmit the panoramic image over the network.

16. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 15 wherein the instructions that determine the position and blend the first and second images operate without positioning information from a human operator.

17. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 15 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

determine whether the second image overlaps the first image based on the position of the second segment relative to the first segment, wherein blending the first image and the second image is only performed when the second image overlaps the first image.

18. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 15 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

correct perspective distortion in the second image relative to the first image prior to blending the first image with the second image.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Amended) An article comprising a computer-readable medium which stores computer-executable instructions for merging a set of images, each image representing a corresponding segment of a view, the set including a first image representing a first segment of the view, a second image representing a second segment of the view, and a third image representing a third segment of the view, where the third segment of the view overlaps both the first segment and the second segment of the view, the instructions being operable to cause a computer to:

- determine a first relative position of the third segment relative to the first segment of the view by processing the content of the third image and the first image;

- determine a first overlap area of the first image and the third image based on the determined first relative position;

- determine a second relative position of the third segment relative to the second segment of the view by processing the content of third image and the second image;

- determine a second overlap area of the second image and third image based on the determined second relative position; and

- if the first overlap area is greater than the second overlap area, offset the position of the third image relative to the first image and the second image based on the determined first relative position;

- otherwise, offset the third image relative to the first image and the second image based on the determined second relative position.

21. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 20 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

- blend the set of images; and

- correct perspective distortion in at least one of the set of images prior to blending the set of images.

22. (Amended) The article of claim 21 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

- determine which of the images is a central one and which are peripheral images; and

- use the central image as an initial reference image in correcting perspective distortion in peripheral images.

23. (Amended) The article of claim 21 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

- determine what pair-wise overlap areas exist between the central image and each of the peripheral images; and

- select as the first peripheral image to be corrected for perspective distortion a peripheral image having a maximum pair-wise overlap area with the central image relative to the other peripheral images.

24. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 23 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

prior to blending the set of images:

determine a first overlap area between a second one of the peripheral images and the central one of the images;

determine a second overlap area between the second one of the peripheral images and the first peripheral one of the images; and

if the first overlap area is greater than the second overlap area, correct perspective distortion in the second one of the peripheral images relative to the central one of the images.

25. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 24 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to:

prior to blending the set of images:

if the first overlap area is less than the second overlap area, correct perspective distortion in the second one of the peripheral images relative to the first peripheral one of the images.

26. (Amended) The article of claim 21 wherein the stored instructions further comprise instructions operable to cause the computer to blend the third image with the first and second image, wherein the blending includes:

dividing the third image into a first portion and a second portion, based on the first position; and

compositing the first portion of the third image on the first image at the first position to produce a composite image; the compositing causing the first portion to mask out a part of the first image.

27. (Amended) The article of claim 27 wherein blending the third image with the first and second image further includes:

dividing the second image into a third portion and a second portion, based on a relative position of the second segment of the view relative to the first segment of the view;

dividing the third portion into a fifth portion and a sixth portion, based on the second relative position; and

compositing the fifth portion of the third image on the composite image based on the second relative position to form the panoramic image, the compositing of the fifth portion causing the fifth portion to mask out a part of the composite image.

28. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

prior to blending the set of images:

determining which of the images is a central one and which are images; and

using the central image as an initial reference image in correcting perspective distortion in peripheral images.

29. The method of claim 28 further comprising:

determining what pair-wise overlap areas exist between the central image and each of the peripheral images; and

selecting as the first peripheral image to have perspective distortion corrected a peripheral image having a maximum pair-wise overlap area with the central image relative to the other peripheral images.